

Bryant, L.E.
[Roberta, TN]

1928

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The Director or Curator of the
Numismatic Museum
New York City

ROBERTA, TENN.

6/21/28

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My dear Sir - May I ask if you have any examples of
Chinese Axe Money? in your collection and if any of it is



like this sketch in any way. Which is supposed to be
Zapotec Money from Mitla, Oaxaca, Mexico - Also
same type is found in Nicaragua + Ecuador.



If not this thin type do you have an example of the
thicker perforated type? If you have any, literature,
pamphlets or brochures for sale describing such money

Can I get copies from you? Any communication will be greatly
Appreciated
Yours Truly
L. E. Bryant

27th June, 1928

Mr. L. E. Bryant,
Roberta, Tenn.

Dear Sir:

We have in this Museum examples of so-called axe money found in Oaxaca. These are not Chinese, and the best authorities do not consider them money but ceremonial pieces. Personally, I have no opinion. The American Museum of Natural History has several thousand of these from one or two large finds.

Your second piece, found in Nicaragua and Ecuador, is probably not money but ceremonial. We have no literature on the subject; there are, however, I think, articles about this. My information has been derived from talks with other museum curators and students of Incan and pre-Colombian archaeology.

Very truly yours,

Curator

5th July, 1928

Mr. L. E. Bryant,
Roberta, Texas

Dear Sir:

Your second letter received. I really believe, as you do, that those egg-shaped coins found in Mexico should be classed as money. We used to so label them in this Museum until we were called down for so doing by our neighbors, The Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, who have the same address as we do. Why not write to Mr. George F. Heye for his opinion? Also, why not write to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, as well as to the National Museum at Washington? However, probably the best place to write to would be the National Museum at Mexico City.

Under no circumstances do I think there is any connection between these and the Chinese barter pieces that might be reproductions of hoes, spades, or pitchforks. The mere fact that all of the Mexican pieces that I have seen conform in shape and fabric to the same type certainly should bind them to the money idea. Our collection is very strong in Chinese axe and hoe money, if you want to call it such. There has been also a great deal of misconception concerning these. Roughly, the best theory is something like this:

As the Chinese were getting out of the barter stage, certain units of value held strong, and gradually they began to make tokens in semblance to certain recognized units of value. The first ones naturally approach nearer the original objects, gradually becoming smaller as the token idea crystallized. Later, certain of the more used types became standardized as money and were inscribed either with place-names, weights, or other identifying marks. I am going away in a few days for the summer so it will be impossible to send you photographs of some of the earlier Chinese pieces, but I will try to include with this letter certain drawings and outlines.

Very truly yours,

Curator

Mr. Howard Wood
Curator Am. Numismatic Society-
New York City-
ROBERTA, TENN. July 8th 1928

Dear Sir - Please let me thank you for your greatly valued letter 7/5 and especially for the enclosed sketches, which with your logical explanation of their origin, is a help to me.

The next time I am in New York I will call on both Mr. Seville & Mr. Heye - letter writing is a poor business with me and I have gotten the idea some where that the Heye folks are special pleaders and unless an idea or discovery fits in their plan of wholly autochthonous evolution, is simply out so and is inadmissible -

After my last work in Mexico I brought home with me possibly 100 small heads - I picked out a dozen of the best ones - all less than 2" x 1" in size & made of Sericite, porphyry, nephrite, jade, jadeite, jasperite & Turquoise - with 3 or 4 pottery - all of which were from Son Juan Teotihuacan and Cholula and every one was totally different and some had been possibly native offerings sent from places, maybe 2000 to 5000 miles distant.

I was on my way to a job in Egypt & and left them with Mr. Pepper & Mr. Seville to go over and give me some idea of their origin & six months later I came back and they had not been unpacked & Mr. Seville told me they were the usual Son Juan heads - One or two of the pottery ones may have been made locally - but 8 or 9 come from British Columbia - Alaska and maybe more distant places - even China - Cambodia - Accidents are not impossible - Best Regards & Thanks - Yours Truly L. E. BRYANT

P.S.

Some where in one of Dr. Morton's books on China he refers to the origin of the Chinese word for money as "Gold Dust" or then word for Gold Dust - or a certain quantity of Gold Dust =

My recollection is that some where, I could possibly find it in my notes, - I was told that in Asia Minor or the result of trade, before or about the time of Croesus, who got credit for it; a fixed quantity of gold dust was a unit of value and that possibly Croesus or a very near predecessor melted this weighed unit into small lumps and stamped them and they became the 1st "Staters"

Later developing into one of the most beautiful gold coins when coined by Philip of Macedonia & others

It would be interesting to know if the East & West Caravan route from China to Asia Minor & Southern Europe had or knew this unit of value? They were all Merchants & traders by both land & sea and while the upper ruling classes were ^{possibly} or in China prohibited from trade - The governments used money values & settled debit balances in a recognized money of some sort - Metallic and even paper.

It must have been different in Egypt - Gold was used for religious purposes somewhat most likely as in Peru and connected with the "Children of the Sun." Silver was at one time more valuable than gold and also used religiously

The Egyptian Stream came in contact with this East & West Migration, but while influenced greatly by it - seems to have persisted in the exchange of commodities without money - long after every surrounding people adopted a medium of exchange. If there is any book on the "migration of money" I would like to get it and see what connections exist along that route.

Best Regards & thanking you again from John T. [Signature]